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Remembering Pilgrimage in the Luttrell Psalter*

The Luttrell Psalter is best known for the high quality and astonishing variety of images in its margins, which range from canonical representations of saints to agricultural technologies to unnamable hybrid creatures. The hybrids provide a starting point for this discussion, particularly a handful of them that, alone among Gothic marginal monsters, wear pilgrims' badges on their hats.

Though the Psalter is usually displayed in the exhibition halls of the British Library and fifteen of its openings are digitally accessible online through the British Library's website at the time of this writing, access to the full manuscript has been quite limited. [1] From 1932 to 2006, most scholars made use of Eric Millar's 1932 partial facsimile with selected images removed from their context on the page. In 2006 a complete color facsimile was published, allowing many more people to peruse the book in its entirety and to judge for themselves what the place of these badge-wearing hybrid creatures was in the overall Psalter. The present essay was inspired by the facsimile and reinterprets the role of the badges in Geoffrey Luttrell's book, re-imagining the conditions under which they were made. As my conclusions in the following discussion are founded upon the experience of looking at the Psalter as a whole, by means of the facsimile, I will not be including images of

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*This work was presented at the Sewanee Medieval Colloquium in April 2011 and invited for inclusion in the proceedings. As of the time of this submission to the ScholarWorks Repository in 2020, those proceedings have not been published.

[1] Michael Camille, *Mirror in Parchment : The Luttrell Psalter and the Making of Medieval England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 41.

discrete details from the pages. Rather, it is my hope that those wishing to verify or pursue points raised herein will be able to refer to the facsimile, and I have given references to its pages within my text. Yet this too will be unavailable to many. I also include references in the notes to the British Library website where digital versions of full-page openings can be viewed in many of the most important instances.

Due to the great variety of images in the book, no single motif pervades the manuscript. Thus, although the pilgrimage images are but a small portion of the overall corpus of Luttrell Psalter images, they are prevalent enough, compared to any other subject, to constitute a substantial theme. Pilgrims' badges appear five times in the Psalter being worn by various beings, and twice more as ornamental motifs. An image on fol. 32v shows Saint James with his pilgrim's hat, staff, and bag adorned with the scallop shell that was the emblem first and foremost of pilgrims to James' shrine at Compostela, and later of pilgrims in general. This is the most conventional of the figures with badges. On fol. 75 r a figure in shaggy garb reminiscent of John the Baptist, but perhaps indicating the hair shirt of a penitent, carries a pilgrim's sack or scrip and wears another scallop shell. Neither of these images is particularly startling in a devotional book.

More surprising images include a striped hybrid on 67v wearing a distinct pilgrim's scallop shell on its hat. In Lucy Freeman Sandler's taxonomy,[2] this is a sequential hybrid progressing from human to animal, but the stripes on the lower

[2] Lucy Freeman Sandler, "Reflections on the Construction of Hybrids in English Gothic Marginal Illustration," in *Art, the ape of nature: Studies in honor of H.W. Janson* (New York: H.N. Abrams, 1981), 55.

body make this creature unusual even within the category of hybrids, and the badge is bizarre detail. On 186v a beaked hybrid with leathery, bat-like wings and a tail transforming into foliage wears a pilgrim's shell on its hat. Michael Camille associates this with the adjacent lines of the psalm naming Israel and the land of Canaan, linked by the idea of wandering.[3] Finally, the well-known page with the ploughman working the lower margin includes, higher on the page, a spotted character wearing a pilgrim's hat.[4] In addition, pilgrims' scallops serve as line fillers on three pages: 159 v, 170 r, and 186v.[5] There is at least one more pilgrimage reference on folio. 104v, where the marginal imagery refers to a miracle story of the Virgin saving pilgrim in childbirth en route to Mont-Saint-Michel. Though this scene does not reference badges, it is relevant to the recurring theme of pilgrimage.

By the 1300s, scallop shells like those worn by the hybrids in the Luttrell Psalter were generic signs of pilgrimage, having expanded their associations beyond their origins in the pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela to indicate pilgrimage in general. The corpus of surviving pilgrims' signs from this period is hugely varied, as many shrines had their own wearable souvenirs, though the shells remained the most widely recognized of them. Those on the hybrid beasts here seem to signify devotional wanderers generally and liminal characters with a devotional spirit rather than any specific connection to Compostela. There are other examples of

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[3] Camille, *Mirror in Parchment*, 157.

[4] British Library Virtual Books, *Turning the Pages*, "Glimpses of Medieval Life: The Luttrell Psalter," p. 20. http://www.bl.uk/onlinegallery

[5] British Library Virtual Books, *Turning the Pages*, "Glimpses of Medieval Life: The Luttrell Psalter," p. 15. http://www.bl.uk/onlinegallery

deliberately generic identifiers in the book, such as heraldic shields that are blank or avoid identifiable heraldry, by using non-specific scrollwork (e.g. folio 187r), as opposed to those that are very specific elsewhere in the book, with the arms of the patron's families, Luttrell and Sutton. While fantastical hybrids with religious costume elements from the real world are not uncommon in the margins of Gothic manuscripts, to the extent of this author's knowledge, the Luttrell Psalter is the *only* book in which hybrids wear pilgrims' badges.

The margins of many manuscripts are populated by apes and other creatures that satirize and thereby critique human activities, including pilgrimage. However, The presence of pilgrims' badges on hybrid creatures is not *necessarily* satirical. Camille has read these badge-bearing babywyns as critiques of pilgrimage. For instance, the beaked hybrid he interprets as an embodiment of hypocrisy, to be contrasted against the proper almsgiving in the *bas-de-page*, where a man opens his purse as a disabled boy is wheeled by on a cart. Camille cites the fourteenth-century *Fasciculus Morum*, a handbook for preachers, which describes ". . . hypocrites, for some of them appear in their face and front part to be mild and meek like a person, but in their back part they are more cruel than lions through the habits of their striking, robbing, and killing. Others likewise appear outwardly clean and chaste, but behind they are more lecherous than horses or asses."[6] Camille reads this and other hybrids as unrepentant sinners, in this case, a pilgrim whose journey was inefficacious for not being in earnest. But if hypocrites are compared to painted

[6] *Fasciculus Morum. A Fourteenth-Century Preacher's Handbook*, Ed. and trans. Siegfried Wenzel (University Park: Penn State University Press, 1989), pp. 514-15. Cited in Margot McIlwain Nishimura, *The Gorleston Psalter: A Study of the Marginal in the Visual Culture of Fourteenth-Century England* (Ph.D diss., NYU, 1999), 37.

hybrids by one fourteenth-century preacher, does that mean that all painted hybrids must describe hypocrites? No, especially since those paintings to which the preacher refers appear to be normal humans from the front with deceptively animal hindquarters, while many of the hybrids in the Psalter are overtly non-human of face as well as of body.

There are other ways to interpret these images. For instance, they might refer to the strangers one meets during the liminal wanderings of pilgrimage or among the travelers converging at a pilgrimage shrine. The discussion that follows presents the reasons why these badge-wearing hybrids cannot have been meant critically, and suggests instead that they, along with the book in which they appear, commemorate the devotional aspirations of an avid pilgrim and patron, Geoffrey Luttrell.

Geoffrey's book is personalized in several ways, most explicitly by his heraldic devices that appear in the pages. Heraldry and badges have much in common. Both are signs added to costume to denote specific affiliations. Fine dress and military arms express noble status, while heraldry names one's household. Similarly, a wide brimmed hat and traveler's bag indicate a pilgrim, with a badge to announce the pilgrim's destination or protector saint. This similarity is one reason why I do not accept that these monsters are necessarily intended as critiques of vices. Geoffrey Luttrell's personal heraldry is also associated with hybrid monsters holding his arms aloft or wearing his helm. Luttrell heraldry is featured prominently and explicitly in the book, as illustrated by the well-known page showing Geoffrey Luttrell on his horse, being helped to arm by his wife, Agnes

Sutton, and his daughter-in-law Beatrice Scrope.[7] The blue field with silver martlets is Geoffrey's device. Agnes also wears her own family's heraldry, the lion rampant, on her dress, which appears elsewhere in the book as well. The display of heraldry in this context is serious and not at all critical. However, the Luttrell device also appears upheld by a hybrid creature on folio 171r,[8] and Geoffrey's crested helmet is worn elsewhere by a bird-hybrid, also painted with expensive metals, on folio 163r. These examples show that the mere association of an object with a grotesque hybrid creature is insufficient to give an image a satirical valence. In fact, the heraldry seems to uplift these creatures into a more dignified status than their odd bodies would otherwise imply. The pilgrims' badges may do the same.

Pilgrims' badges appear in the margins of other medieval manuscripts too, though not worn by hybrids. In 1965, Kurt Köster analyzed painted depictions of pilgrims' signs in the margins of Flemish manuscripts from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and also the traces of actual badges that had once been sewn onto the pages.[9] Köster explained these marginal badges in terms of collecting practices on the part of the owners of these personal devotional books, and in conjunction with the artistic development of illusionistic naturalism in manuscript

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[7] British Library Virtual Books, *Turning the Pages*, "Glimpses of Medieval Life: The Luttrell Psalter," p. 27. http://www.bl.uk/onlinegallery

[8] British Library Virtual Books, *Turning the Pages*, "Glimpses of Medieval Life: The Luttrell Psalter," p. 22. http://www.bl.uk/onlinegallery

[9] Kurt Köster, "Religiöse Medaillen and Wallfahrts-Devotionalien in der Flämischen Buchmalerei des 15. und frühen 16. Jarhunderts," in *Buch und Welt: Festschrift für Gustav Hofmann zum 65. Geburtstag Dargebracht*, edited by Hans Striedl, Gustav Hofmann, and Joachim Wieder (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1965), 459-504.

painting. His interpretation did not seriously address the devotional value of the badges to the books' owners.

In a forthcoming dissertation and article, Megan Foster-Campbell analyzes the painted and missing badges that Köster noted, but also brings to light a corpus of surviving badges sewn into manuscript pages.[10] Her discussion reveals specific devotional patterns in which the badges help book owners triangulate between their daily reading practices and their actual pilgrimages, which were exceptional events in their devotional lives. In one example, Foster-Campbell proposes that the patron of a book of hours may have instructed the artist to create an image based on a badge, for the wings of the angel at the center of the scene and the arches that frame it recall the heart-shape in a badge sewn onto the page.[11] Like Köster's examples, Foster-Campbell's come from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, but there may be something similar in the fourteenth-century Luttrell Psalter. If so, this is all the more reason to consider seriously the devotional significance of the Psalter images to Geoffrey Luttrell. The image of at the bottom of the first page of the Psalter is a Virgin and Child beneath a canopy.[12] Camille considered the possibility

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[10] Megan Foster-Campbell, "Pilgrimage through the Pages: Pilgrims' Badges in Late Medieval Devotional Manuscripts" (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, forthcoming); Megan Foster Campbell, "Pilgrimage through the Pages: Pilgrims' Badges in Late Medieval Devotional Manuscripts," in Sarah Blick and Laura Gelfand, eds., *Push Me, Pull You: Art and Devotional Interaction in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Leiden: Brill, forthcoming 2011).

[11] Foster-Campbell, "Pilgrimage on a Page: Pilgrims' Badges in Late Medieval Manuscripts," in Virginia Raguin and Dina Bangdel, *Pilgrimage and Faith: Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam* (Chicago: Serindia Press, 2010), 205.

[12] British Library Virtual Books, *Turning the Pages*, "Glimpses of Medieval Life: The Luttrell Psalter," p. 4. http://www.bl.uk/onlinegallery

that this may represent a pilgrim's badge from a Marian shrine visited by Geoffrey Luttrell. Its scale and format are similar to badges from a number of Marian shrines, though the conventionality of the image makes the association inconclusive.

Could these pilgrims' signs in the Luttrell Psalter, integrated into the line fillers and sported by hybrids, serve, like the badges sewn onto the pages of fifteenth-century books of hours, to remind the book's owner of his own pilgrimages? Possibly. Was Geoffrey Luttrell himself a pilgrim? Most probably. Michelle Brown, in the introduction to the 2006 facsimile of the Luttrell Psalter, presumes that he would have made pilgrimages late in his life due to anxiety over his need for heirs.[13] Of course, he could have been concerned about any number of things. Pilgrimages to local and regional shrines would have been typical for a member of Geoffrey's social class at the time. Assuming he did perform pilgrimages, the question then becomes how personally invested he was in his pilgrimages.

While we have no *direct* documentation of Geoffrey Luttrell making any pilgrimages, his will is strong evidence for his activities as a pilgrim. Not only did he leave donations to specific images that were frequented by pilgrims, he referred to them in ways that suggest familiarity with their specific locations. For instance, he left money to three images of the Virgin Mary: "the image of the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary on the south wall [of St Paul's Cathedral]"[14], to "the image of Saint Mary in the holy mother church of Canterbury in the vault underneath the

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[13] Michelle Brown, "Introduction," in *The Luttrell Psalter: A Facsimile*, ed. Michelle Brown (London: The British Library), 8.

[14] Camille, *Mirror in Parchment*, 136.

choir"[15] and to the "blessed Mary beyond the north door of the Abbey of the Blessed Mary of York."[16] He also left a jewel to the image of the Blessed Mary of Walsingham, a major pilgrimage site in England.[17]

Not one of the Marian images listed in the will survives. Nevertheless, much is still known of the one at Canterbury, and its appearance can be judged by surviving pilgrims' badges from the site. This was a sculpture of the Virgin located at an altar in the crypt of Canterbury Cathedral, which, along with Thomas Becket's tomb, was an important focus for visitors to the church. The chapel's prominence grew in the second half of the thirteenth century under the reign of Henry III.[18] The shrine reached the apex of its popularity when Edward The Black Prince stated his wish to be buried in front of the image. Financial rolls from Canterbury indicate royal donations to the Undercroft chapel throughout the decades of the 14th century, putting Geoffrey's donations to this chapel into fine political company.

It is tempting to suspect that, if the image at the beginning of the Psalter does represent a pilgrim's badge, it might be from one of the shrines mentioned in the will. If so, it wouldn't be a badge from either Walsingham or Canterbury, since the Psalter image is a *Madonna Lactans*, whereas Walsingham's image was an annunciation and Canterbury's was seated, holding a standing Christ child. I have

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[15] Camille, *Mirror in Parchment*, 136.

[16] Camille, *Mirror in Parchment*, 136.

[17] Camille, *Mirror in Parchment*, 136.

[18] Sarah Blick, "King and Cleric: Richard II and the iconography of St Thomas Becket and St Edward the Confessor at Our Lady of Undercroft, Canterbury Cathedral," in *Beyond Pilgrim Souvenirs and Secular Badges: Essays in honour of Brian Spencer*, edited by Sarah Blick (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2007), 190.

not been able to identify this painted image with the pilgrim signs from any specific shrine, though given the large number of Marian badges that already cannot be identified with specific sites, this is hardly surprising.

Another possible pilgrimage that Geoffrey may have undertaken might have been to a place associated with Thomas of Lancaster. This political martyr was killed a mere nine miles from the Luttrell manor at Hooten Pagnell, and a shrine on the site at Pontefract flourished briefly with miracles and pilgrims' badges.[19] Geoffrey's political allegiances were pro-Lancastrian, and he had even escorted Thomas of Lancaster's widowed mother to France in 1298. A fourteenth-century hand other than the scribe's has labeled a marginal beheading scene with the word "Lancastres." This caption could even have been added by Geoffrey. Little imagination is needed to picture him visiting this local site.

I do not believe that commemorating specific pilgrimages is a concern of the Luttrell Psalter. Rather, I see the book and whatever pilgrimages Geoffrey made to religious sites to be parallel gestures of devotion. In a break from my original impression of Geoffrey Luttrell as a man preoccupied with worldly concerns, an impression I drew years ago, perhaps due to my own confusion of method with conclusion, from Michael Camille's Marxist analysis in his article "Labouring for the Lord," I now consider Geoffrey to be more fervently devout, and if his devotional practices were rather conventional, that makes them no less heartfelt.[20]

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[19] Camille, *Mirror in Parchment*, 74.

[20] Michael Camille, "Labouring for the Lord: The Ploughman and the Social Order in the Luttrell Psalter," *Art History* 10 (1987): 423-454.

An interesting case for comparison has been made by Joel T. Rosenthal in his book *Margaret Paston's Piety.*[21] Rosenthal argues on the basis of Margaret Paston's letters and will that her devotional habits and sentiments were highly conventional and probably typical of members of the gentry in the fifteenth century. Though the Paston letters and wills post-date the Luttrell Psalter by about a century and a quarter, there is still something to be learned from the comparison. Margaret apparently owned a Book of Hours, more popular in her day than the Psalter, but it has not survived and there is no indication that she had one made for herself personally.[22] She was not much of a pilgrim. Only once, when she was a young newlywed, did she make mention of a pilgrimage to Walsingham and St. Leonard's while her husband was sick in London. His mother sent a donation of wax to Walsingham at the same time but did not go herself. Yet despite Margaret's many travels and relocations throughout her life, she never mentioned making pilgrimage again, even despite living near Bromholm during the height of its Holy Rood pilgrimage cult. Either she did not make pilgrimages, or they were not significant enough to find a place in her correspondence. In her will, she left beneficiences to twenty-one religious institutions including leper houses, monasteries, anchoresses, parish churches, and Norwich Cathedral.[23] No significant pilgrimage sites were represented in her will, no specific devotional images were specified, not even Walsingham where she once went, and even at Norwich Cathedral she seems to

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[21] Joel T. Rosenthal, *Margaret Paston's Peity* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

[22] Rosenthal, 17.

[23] Rosenthal, 107.

have paid no mind to Saint William or his shrine there. Rosenthal finds in Margaret's bequests an intention of asserting her identity with her birth family and manor of Mautby, with support for the Mautby parish church and villagers that is comparable to Geoffrey Luttrell's association with Irnham, but there is no parallel with Geoffrey's support for Marian pilgrimage images. As far as one can reasonably compare a fourteenth-century man with a fifteenth-century woman, Margaret Paston's writings do support the impression of Geoffrey Luttrell as a committed pilgrim.

Returning to the arming scene that serves as the patron's portrait within the book, we see the most elaborate and conventional representation of Geoffrey. The line above the picture reads "Galfredus Louterel me fieri fecit," or "Geoffrey Luttrell caused me to be made." Previous literature on the Psalter has considered Geoffrey the primary reader of the volume, so this page, recalling his chivalric prime and conspicuously pairing Lord Luttrell with the Lord in the opening line of the Psalm on the facing page, "The Lord said unto my lord," appears self-aggrandizing. I see this instead as a commemorative page for a different reader. We will never know what Geoffrey prayed for at the shrines of the saints or images of the Virgin that he likely visited. Nevertheless, a man commissioning an expensive Psalter when he was beyond middle age must surely have had his successors in mind as readers. Even though pilgrimages are performed with the body and require firmness of will and commitment of time and resources, commissioning the book was likely the greater gesture, and the one that could be passed down. The book took longer to complete (indeed, it was left unfinished), required more resources, and depending on the

degree of interaction between patron and artists, perhaps even deeper involvement in the process. I see the images in the Psalter not as pictures *for* Geoffrey, but *from* him, probably intended originally for his heirs. I believe that he contributed a great deal to the imagery in the Psalter, perhaps not by dictating what it should be, but at least by letting the artists know quite a lot about himself, from which they selected images, incidents, and anecdotes to present on his behalf.

For instance, the page showing four crowned women in the carriage, one of whom holds a squirrel, may refer to the service Geoffrey had performed for four different English queens, including Phillipa of Hainault who was known for a love of squirrels,[24] and Geoffrey may well have considered such royal service worthy of commemoration through such a composite image.[25] Yet, details such as the queen's lapdog taking a potty break seem like amusing stories one might retell years after the event. The windmill and the rabbit warren are depicted with great detail, as is the plough that Camille studied in such depth.[26] Both windmill and warren were technologies introduced by Geoffrey to his lands.[27] Likewise, the overshot vertical water wheel shown on folio 181r was new technology in the region. These are the

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[24] Camille, *Mirror in Parchment*, 80.

[25] Camille, *Mirror in Parchment*, 80. British Library Virtual Books, *Turning the Pages*, "Glimpses of Medieval Life: The Luttrell Psalter," p. 25. http://www.bl.uk/onlinegallery

[26] British Library Virtual Books, *Turning the Pages*, "Glimpses of Medieval Life: The Luttrell Psalter," p. 14. http://www.bl.uk/onlinegallery

[27] Brown, 12.

sorts of close connections between the images and Geoffrey's life that suggest the specific influence of the patron on the design of the images.

I interpret these anecdotal images as evidence of artists who had come to know Lord Luttrell's personal interests, perhaps having spent time in his household,[28] and while they are certainly not snapshots of daily life on the manor, I see them as indications that Geoffrey committed time as well as money to the Psalter project. Though it is difficult to imagine Geoffrey Luttrell specifically requesting these subjects, I imagine them chosen by the painters based on what they knew of their client.

Geoffrey Luttrell performed three known devotional acts: the making of the Psalter, the building of his monumental tomb in the church at Irnham, and the various bequests in his will. None of these was particularly original, but all three were more substantial projects than were strictly necessary. By comparison with what is known of Margaret Paston's life and bequests, he also seems to have taken a particular interest in pilgrimage. Given these indicators of his devotional intensity, it becomes all the easier to envision him praying at the pilgrimage sites to which he left money. I do think Geoffrey performed pilgrimages during his lifetime, and that his pilgrimages were more than perfunctory gestures. Even though it cannot be demonstrated that the Luttrell Psalter commemorates any specific pilgrimages, the book does serve as evidence, along with other sources, for Geoffrey's acts of pilgrimage during his lifetime. At the very least, the inclusion of the pilgrims' signs

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[28] Janet Backhouse suggests such a scenario with reference to other documented cases. Janet Backhouse, *Medieval Rural Life in the Luttrell Psalter* (Toronto: Univ. Toronto Press, 2000), 15.

as line fillers and on the hats of hybrids was in the forefront of the minds of the book's artists as they worked to make for their patron a book that would please him according to what they knew of his interests, and that would outlive him.

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